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*With Complements of Henry Lambert*  
*Newton Civil Service Reform Association*

THE PROGRESS

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

THE UNITED STATES.

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## THE PROGRESS OF CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

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Civil Service Reform has now become an established fact. A good beginning has been made. It is undergoing a fair trial, and promises to become permanent.

This is a result which, but a few years ago, no one conceived possible at so early a day; for, by the great majority of our people, Civil Service Reform was not even thought of. The "Spoils System" had been in operation so long, and had so permeated our political life, that it was commonly regarded as a natural outgrowth of our democratic institutions; that it was indeed a necessary feature of our system of government, that the party in power should control the public offices, in order that its policy might be more effectually carried out.

A reform which aimed to overthrow this system, and substitute for political favoritism the proved fitness of an applicant for office, entered upon the contest against the most formidable obstacles, and could only hope for success at some very distant day.

In view of the remarkable results already attained, I have thought that it might interest you this evening to give an account of the progress of the reform, first noting briefly some of the results of the system it seeks to supplant, and the character of the change it seeks to introduce.

Under our first ~~five~~<sup>six</sup> Presidents, appointments to public office were made only of those well fitted for the work they had to do, and they were not removed except for sufficient cause.

A select committee of the House of Representatives in 1868 reported that from the sources of information accessible, they have not learned of a single removal among the class of inferior officers, except for cause, from the commencement of the administration of President Washington to the accession of President Jackson.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE "SPOILS SYSTEM."

Under his rule a marked change took place. While his predecessor, John Quincy Adams, had made but two removals during his whole administration, under Jackson, acting upon the theory that to the victors belong the spoils, in ten months nearly two thousand removals of all grades were made.

From that time we have been suffering from the evils naturally incident to a system that fills the public offices to promote political ends, rather than to secure wise and economical administration.

The public has known but little of the extent to which this abuse has been carried in even recent times. In the New York Custom House, during the five years preceding the incumbency of Collector Arthur, there were sixteen hundred and seventy-eight removals, an average of more than one a day, an aggregate nearly equal to the removal of every official twice in that time.

In three years one collector removed eight hundred and thirty out of a total of nine hundred and three; another, five hundred and seventy in sixteen months. For a period of six years, more than two hundred and thirty in an aggregate of about one thousand, or nearly one fourth, were removed every year, not because they were inefficient or dishonest, not even because they were of a different political party, but merely to serve the interests of those who, for the time being, controlled appointments.

Their places were filled, of course, by new men, who had everything to learn, and were often inefficient or unworthy.

The experience of Richard Grant White, not a friend, but an opponent of the reform, — and therefore his testimony is the more valuable, — is instructive upon this point. He says that a vacancy had occurred in his office, and five candidates in succession were sent to him and speedily rejected, because "not one of them knew how to copy and address a letter correctly, how to make a simple calculation, and how to behave himself to his superior officer and to strangers. To excuse himself for sending such men, the collector said, if you knew how I am pressed by politicians to

find places, you wouldn't wonder at my sending you anything that goes on two legs."

A worse case is this: A woman was named for a place the duties of which involved the counting of money. The chief of the bureau knew that in the Secretary's office there were papers showing that she had been imprisoned for forgery, had betrayed to a gang of counterfeiters some detectives, to aid whom she had been employed, and had been generally a woman of bad character. The Secretary's attention was called to these facts, and her appointment objected to; but though he yielded so far as not to insist on her filling the place for which she was at first selected, he gave her another, and afterwards promoted her.

Mr. James, postmaster in New York, says, "I came down to my office one night and found six or eight men stowed away under the benches dead drunk. I determined to change the entire system, and work every man on his merits. My removals for drunkenness alone averaged twelve men a month for some time."

With such officials, naturally the national business was done with great inefficiency. One committee in 1877 reported that for several years the force employed in the Bureau of Printing and Engraving was twice, and sometimes thrice, as large as was necessary, and that half the force then employed could be dismissed.

Mr. Dawes quotes an eminent official as saying, that with competent men more and better work in his office could be accomplished by fifty less clerks than he then had; as it was, he must have fifty more. Then the

#### — COST AND LOSS,

Owing to such inefficient men, were enormous.

Mr. Schenck, Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, declared in 1868 that the loss in the collection of the whiskey tax was at least 70 per cent. And the reason he assigned was, that inspectors and their subordinates were appointed for other reasons than their fitness.

Mr. Rollins, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, in his report for 1867, speaks of the losses in his department as "extensive, alarming and monstrous," and attributes the result to the same cause, and speaks of the Civil Service of that period as "worse than that of any other civilized important nation on earth."

The cost of collecting the revenue in the New York Custom House rose from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent under John Quincy Adams, to  $5\frac{1}{4}$  per cent under Jackson and Van Buren.

The Jay Committee reported that the cost of collecting our revenue was three times that of France, four times that of Germany, and five times that of England. And should account be taken of the losses by peculations, defalcations, whiskey frauds, star-route swindles and other forms of rascality, they would amount to hundreds of millions.

In the natural order of evolution, the fruits of the spoils system are: eager efforts of "workers" to secure the public offices, leading to fraud, corruption, subserviency; embittered party spirit; places multiplied to satisfy the "claims" of partisans; the shiftless and incompetent appointed to office; followed by inefficiency, waste, loss, rascality, and a general lowering of the tone of political morality.

Such are some of the results of a system that fills the public offices more with reference to party interests and political opinions than to the efficiency of the public servants, or the most wise and prudent management of the public business.

#### THE MERIT SYSTEM.

Jefferson's conception of what he considered essential in a public servant is embodied in what we may term his "short catechism:" "Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the Constitution?" The reform sought to be effected to-day recognizes the same fundamental points, and is fitly called the "merit system," because it aims to fill the public offices only with those who are well fitted to do their duties.

This end it seeks to gain by competitive examinations, open to all qualified persons ; those who are successful being subjected to a period of actual trial in the duties of their office before final appointment ; consequently they win their positions solely by their own merits.

This method not only secures competent officials, but is also a complete antidote to the power of patronage ; for those who compete may be of either sex, of any color, from every rank in life, from all parts of the country, and of every variety of political and religious opinions. And only the few successful among these can win places. Evidently, personal favoritism and party influence can be of little avail against such adverse conditions. Moreover, the merit system, while it annuls patronage and secures competent public servants, does much to purify the political atmosphere generally, by removing the causes of corruption.

#### COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS.

Some have objected to examinations that they are merely scholastic tests, and prove nothing as to the practical ability of candidates ; but they ignore the most important fact, that the examination settles nothing, that it only shows whether a man is worth trying ; and that he must succeed as an actual worker before he can be appointed. Is not this the test of tests ? What better one can be devised ?

In England, they tried various methods through a period of fifty years to free their public offices from the influences of patronage, and to secure worthy public servants ; and finally adopted open competitive examinations as the final and best result of all their experience.

We have the good fortune to be able to profit by their labors, and to begin with a method, so far from being a mere experiment, that it has been in successful use for over thirty years in filling positions in the Indian Empire of England, and in England itself since 1870.

## PASS EXAMINATIONS FIRST INTRODUCED.

The evils of the spoils system soon became apparent, and were denounced by Calhoun, Webster and other public men, as tending to the subversion of our institutions; and a growing sense of the necessity of checking them at last induced Congress, in 1853 to 1855, to pass acts requiring examinations for admission to the departments at Washington. These were merely "pass examinations," as they are called. They were conducted by some subordinate official. Every candidate was examined separately and privately, without competition, and without any fixed rules. And only those selected by persons having political influence had any chance of being admitted to examination. And examiners were constantly liable to "pass" inferior persons, owing to the influences brought to bear upon them by those who recommended candidates.

Although some improvement upon the previous utter want of system, these examinations fell far short of the needed effect, and for some time little progress was made in reform.

## FIRST CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION.

It was not until 1867 that any important move was made in its favor. This was by Mr. Jencks, of Rhode Island, who introduced a bill, made an able report and several speeches in its behalf. Unfortunately, death soon put an end to his labors and deprived the cause of an able advocate. But the seed he had sown bore good fruit. Attention was so awakened to the necessity of reform, that President Grant, in his message in 1870, called the attention of Congress to it, and that body passed an act in March, 1871, which authorized the President to prescribe, for admission to the Civil Service, such regulations as would best promote its efficiency, and ascertain the fitness of each candidate for the position he sought.

For this purpose, it says, he may "employ suitable persons to conduct such inquiries, and may prescribe their duties, and estab-

lish regulations for the conduct of persons who may receive appointments in the Civil Service.”

In accordance with this act, President Grant appointed a Civil Service Commission, of which George William Curtis was made chairman, afterwards succeeded by Dorman B. Eaton, and an appropriation of \$25,000 was made by Congress to defray its expenses. A like sum was voted next year; but after that nothing was granted until June, 1882, when, instead of \$25,000 asked for by the President, \$15,000 was grudgingly appropriated.

#### OPEN COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS.

It is due to Mr. Silas W. Burt, Naval Officer in New York, who had long been greatly interested in the subject of Reform, to say that he deserves the credit of having been the first to introduce open competitive examinations. Before the appointment of Grant's committee, he had held such an examination in his office. And when the rules of that committee were made applicable to the Treasury offices in New York in 1872, comprising those of the Collector, Naval Officer, Surveyor, Appraiser and Assistant Treasurer, each of which had a separate examining board, he was chairman of that for Naval Officer.

The chairmen of these several boards formed a “Board of Revision and Appeal,” having general charge of the new methods in New York, and of this board Mr. Burt was chairman. And since then he has shown himself one of the most earnest and efficient workers in the cause of Reform.

Under Grant's commission, open competitive examinations were introduced in the departments at Washington, and Customs Service at New York, and in part in the New York Postoffice.

Although this commission labored under many disadvantages in trying a new experiment, it was able to make a very satisfactory report, which was approved by the President and his cabinet.

That report, made in 1874, stated that as a result of the two years' trial, these examinations had given persons of superior capacity and character to the service; had developed more energy

in the discharge of duty ; had diminished the pressure from those seeking places for favorites and friends ; had relieved the heads of departments, to a large extent, from the demands on their time made by office-seekers ; had made it easier to dismiss the unworthy, than when the influence of patrons was used to keep them in place ; and had diminished the pressure and intrigue to remove worthy incumbents in order to give their places to other and often inferior men.

The rules adopted by Grant's commission were prepared by the chairman, Mr. Curtis. They were admirably adapted for their purpose, and have served as the basis of similar rules since then. The great interest taken by Mr. Curtis at that time, and the practical value of his work, entitle him to be regarded as the leader of the Reform — a character which he has worthily maintained ever since. Other able men took an active part in the movement, but the times were not propitious, public sentiment did not sustain them, and Congress refused any further appropriation, although the President asked for it. As a consequence,

#### COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS

Were everywhere suspended, and a return made to "pass examinations." And this method continued in use at Washington until July, 1883, after the passage of the Civil Service Reform Act.

Towards the end of Grant's administration, owing to the feeling created by the revelation of great political corruption at Washington, a movement began, which, if not in name, was in fact, connected with the Civil Service Reform movement. This was the formation in Boston of a club of young men for the purpose of nominating Benjamin H. Bristow for the Presidency, on account of the stand he had taken against corruption while Secretary of the Treasury. Although it was finally called the "Bristow Club," it was debated whether it should not be called the Civil Service Reform Club, for it was to promote that reform that they desired the nomination of Bristow. They failed to accomplish that, but gave important aid in the election of Hayes.

President Hayes favored reform of the Civil Service, and strongly urged it in his messages to Congress; yet he did things not consistent with his professions, and Congress paid little attention to his recommendations, and gave him no effectual aid. But we owe it to him that an order was passed in March, 1879, enforcing the use of

#### COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS IN THE NEW YORK CUSTOM HOUSE.

The entire charge of this work was given to Mr. Burt by the Collector, General Merritt, who said to him, "If you can rekindle the dead embers of Civil Service Reform you are entitled to any fame it may bring." Mr. Burt prepared a code of rules almost identical with those of Mr. Curtis in 1872; and, "in order," he says, "that a favorable public sentiment might be aroused, I invited to these examinations prominent men of every profession, and particularly clergymen and editors, as teachers of the people. No matter how prejudiced against the reform methods these visitors were when they came, we never failed to convert them by the practical demonstration."

The good results of the new system are thus spoken of by Mr. Burt:

"The increase of emulation and efficiency is remarkable. So eager are they to improve, that they often learn as much in one year as they learned under the old system in six." And Mr. Comstock, Deputy Naval Officer, says, "The improvements in consequence of the examinations have astonished us. The new system has made the officers more manly and efficient, and has raised the moral tone of the whole force."

In 1880, Postmaster James revived the competitive methods in some parts of his office, and has borne his emphatic testimony to the good results. The officials upon whom this additional labor devolved, received no additional compensation. And when the President, desiring that these examinations should be more general and uniform, asked Congress for an appropriation, it was refused.

But, notwithstanding this, competitive examinations continued to be held in the New York Custom House and Postoffice until the passage of the Reform Act of 1883.

#### DORMAN B. EATON VISITS ENGLAND.

Feeling that more light was needed upon the methods and progress of reform in other countries, President Hayes had formally requested Mr. Dorman B. Eaton to visit England for the purpose of making such inquiries. Mr. Eaton spent several months in a careful, thorough examination; and his report was transmitted to Congress in December, 1879, by the President, in a message which described it as an elaborate and comprehensive history of the whole subject. This report was afterwards embodied in Mr. Eaton's "Civil Service in Great Britain," a work of exceeding value for the mass of information it contains, and for the aid it has afforded us in our efforts for reform.

For this invaluable service Mr. Eaton received no compensation from the Government, not even his personal expenses to England having been paid.

And to Mr. Eaton is due, also, the credit of originating

#### CIVIL SERVICE REFORM ASSOCIATIONS.

He says, "My experience as the successor of Mr. Curtis in the chairmanship of President Grant's Civil Service Commission, convinced me that a more comprehensive effort and a more enlightened public opinion were essential to success. After a careful study of English experience on the subject, twenty-four gentlemen were invited to meet at my house in New York city, in May, 1877, who then formed the New York Civil Service Reform Association, which has since held the leading place in the work and advocacy of Reform."

A Constitution was adopted, Dr. Bellows was chosen President, and an executive committee appointed, which held meetings at first regularly, and then at intervals; but owing to differences of opinion upon current topics among its members, accomplished no practical work.

## RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE NEW YORK ASSOCIATION.

In October, 1880, the association was re-organized. This seems to have been stimulated by letters written to the "Nation" a short time previously. In August, a correspondent said, "Our reform must be accomplished by agitation; by a thorough stirring up of the mass of the people in language they can understand; the reformers must come in actual contact with the masses, and show up the abuses of our present system in the clearest light. We must imitate the Loyal Publication Society of eighteen years ago, and among high and low, rich and poor, become earnest propagandists. In consequence of the lack of this agitation the country is not ripe for reform.

"The majority have no definite and accurate idea of it; many know it only by name; many suspect it of being visionary. It will never be carried until the people make such a clamor for it that the venal press will have to support it, and some party be obliged to promise to put it into effect." This was followed quickly by another writer, who urged the expediency of an organization whose basis should be the whole country, with a central committee in New York, and auxiliary organizations in all the larger centres of population, and which should publish documents bearing on the reform. To defray the cost of these an annual membership fee of \$1 should be paid. A number of other writers followed, heartily approving the proposed plan, and offering various sums from \$1 up to \$50, and even \$50 a year to promote it.

Some there were who thought the public interest much over-rated, and ignorance of the subject still deplorably great. One writes, "My association is wholly with the common people, and though my political friends all admit the need of improvement in political morals, I cannot name three who have any definite idea of what is meant by Civil Service Reform, or how the 'spoils system' is responsible for our demoralization." Another says a leading reformer discouraged him from taking any part in the movement, because the times were not ripe for it.

Even a leading reformer of to-day, one who has been most

active from the very beginning, took the same view, and said he should wait until the times seemed more propitious before joining in the new movement.

Nevertheless, the cause found so much favor, that in October the "Nation" could say, "We are able to announce as the result of all this discussion, that active steps are being taken for a re-organization of the old Civil Service Reform Association, in the direction indicated." "A public statement will be made of the objects of the association, and of the means by which it proposes to accomplish them."

#### A CONSTITUTION ADOPTED.

On the 11th of October, 1880, a meeting was held, and the re-organization effected, with George William Curtis for president. A Constitution was adopted, which declared that appointments to the minor public offices should be made only of those who, after an open competitive examination and a period of probation, had proved their fitness for the positions sought; and that removals should be made only for sufficient cause, such as dishonesty, negligence or inefficiency, and never on account of political opinions, or for refusal to render party service.

One essential feature of the association was that it aimed to be entirely unpartisan. Its leaders were of both political parties, and were alike interested to secure legislation equal in its application to all, irrespective of race, color, creed, sex or politics.

Acting on this broad principle, it soon won adherents. The old association numbered but one hundred members. Under the new organization they increased the first year to five hundred and eighty-three from thirty-three States and Territories. In the second year the number rose to twelve hundred and thirty-two, and later to over fourteen hundred.

#### FORMATION OF OTHER ASSOCIATIONS.

One great object at which it aimed was the formation of other associations, so that in a short time eight were formed, — Brooklyn, Cambridge, Boston, West Newton, Cincinnati, Phila-

delphia, Milwaukee and San Francisco, — while seven others were in process of formation.

These associations did much to promote the cause of Reform. They brought it more prominently before the public, and were an evidence of the growing interest that was excited. By publications, lectures, discussions, articles in periodicals and newspapers, they disseminated juster views and abated opposition.

It was soon thought that a union of the various associations in a common league was desirable as a means of promoting greater unity of views and giving more weight to their action. Therefore a conference was called in August, 1881, at Newport, which was well attended, and resulted in the formation of a National League, with Mr. Curtis for president, and having its headquarters in New York. At the meetings of its executive committee every association is represented by a delegate, who can act by proxy in case he cannot attend its meetings.

In June, 1882, a preliminary meeting was held in Boston for the purpose of forming a league of the associations in this State; and, shortly after, its organization was effected and a constitution adopted. Charles Francis Adams was chosen president. It was organized on the same basis as the National League, and has been doing the same work in its own sphere.

The New York Association, after its re-organization, made a special work of printing and circulating pamphlets and documents bearing upon the subject of Reform. In the first seven months nearly thirty thousand had been circulated; during the next year over two hundred and thirty thousand; and in the third year the total had risen to over three hundred and fifty thousand, besides numerous circulars and blank forms of petitions to Congress.

Through its secretary a correspondence was opened with influential persons in different parts of the country, and an impulse given to local action and the formation of new associations.

## SUIT AGAINST GENERAL CURTIS.

In 1881, through its legal advisers, suit was brought against General Curtis for levying contributions for political purposes upon public employés, in violation of the statute of 1876. After some delay, the trial resulted in his conviction and a fine of \$1000.

This was an important decision, because it showed that the law could be enforced, and it strengthened the determination of reformers to have it enforced. It has made those attempting to exact assessments more cautious in their proceedings. They have been compelled to resort to expedients for evading the law ; among others, that of asking for contributions as annual dues to associations. They have ceased to menace or demand definite amounts or a percentage of salaries, and only request "voluntary contributions."

It has had a marked effect upon office-holders, in encouraging them to resist such exactions. There is strong testimony upon this point, from many heads of important offices, in the Second Report of the Civil Service Commission, going to show that since the act went into effect in many offices such contributions had almost entirely ceased.

## AWAKENING OF THE PUBLIC MIND.

There had been a decided awakening in the public mind since 1870 in regard to Civil Service Reform. The evils of the "spoils system" had become more fully exposed and widely known. Wherever the new method had been tried, such good effects had followed as fully to vindicate it and prepare the way for further progress. Many influential papers had come to openly advocate it. Objections had been answered and doubts removed, and the true purpose and merits of the new system had become better known. Conventions and congresses of churches, chambers of commerce, and other public bodies had declared in its favor. State Legislatures had recognized its importance, and it entered into the local politics of cities and towns. So strong

was the evident drift, that political parties could no longer disregard it; and as early as 1876 we find them, prior to Hayes' election, putting into their platforms the sounding platitudes with which we have since become so familiar, which were merely meant to raise hopes they had no intention of realizing, and to indicate a purpose they never intended to accomplish. In platform after platform the opposing parties pledged themselves to reform of the Civil Service; but after election entirely ignored it. Presidential candidates urged weighty reasons and their own strong convictions in its favor, yet no Civil Service bill could be enacted. Public men were slow to put themselves on record either in favor of it or against it. In New York city the candidates for Congress were questioned as to their views, and but one gave any answer. Candidates for the Speakership of the House of Representatives were questioned, and but one replied. So powerful still was the opposition, that Grant, Hayes, Garfield, all advocates of the reform, in succession succumbed to the pressure brought to bear upon them, and did many things quite inconsistent with their professions.

#### THE MURDER OF GARFIELD.

Such was the general aspect of things when a sudden, very unexpected event produced a marked change. The murder of President Garfield, a victim to the "spoils system," slain by a "crank" because he could not get the place he sought, stirred the nation as nothing else had stirred it, and awakened it to a clearer perception of its inherent evils and dangers.

Guiteau, a man of ill-balanced mind, who had failed in other ways to mend his fortunes, fell into the ranks of the office-seekers. Foiled in his efforts to get a place, and crazed by his disappointment, he fancied that the President, a decided advocate of reform, was the obstacle that stood in his way. Were he removed, Vice-President Arthur, a stalwart, and little interested in reform, would be in the ascendant, and he might find the office he sought. He determined, therefore, to take the life of the President. He bought a pistol, and practised shooting at a mark.

that his aim might be certain, and when he thought the time had come, he met his victim in the railroad station and there shot him.

For months the wounded President lived in great suffering. For months the country was kept in excitement and uncertainty. And when at last the President died, his cruel murder was commonly looked upon as due to the evil influences of the existing system of filling the public offices, and some change was loudly demanded. Every newspaper in every village in the land took up the theme, and multitudes who had never thought of Civil Service Reform had it forced on their attention. From this universal discussion there came forth light — and light is progress.

Many grew restless under the inaction of both political parties. They began to waiver in their allegiance, and were ready to welcome any change that would promote the cause they had at heart.

#### REPUBLICAN DEFEATS.

In this state of the public mind the unseemly interference of the administration in the election of Governor in New York in 1882 led to the defeat of the Republican candidate and the election of a Democrat — Grover Cleveland — by the sweeping majority of 192,000. The public indignation was still further excited by the infamous circular issued by Mr. Hubbell, acting for the Republican party, demanding, notwithstanding the recent conviction of General Curtis, contributions from all office-holders, down to the pages, porters and scrub-women of the departments.

The consternation of the Republican party caused by the defeat in New York was deepened by the result of the elections in the 5th and 9th Districts of Massachusetts. In the former, the Independents threw their votes in favor of Mr. Morse, a Democrat, who was elected. In the latter, they put up their own Independent candidate, Theodore Lyman, whose stainless reputation was a guarantee of an upright, honorable course, and he was elected by over 2000 majority.

The candidate for re-election in the 9th District,—Mr.

Candler,—in reply to a letter sent by your president asking his views as to Civil Service Reform, had replied that he was in favor of “a radical reform of the Civil Service;” but, in different ways, his conduct was so little in keeping with his professions, that the friends of reform, bent on being represented by one on whom they could more safely rely, put up their own candidate with the result stated.

And this defeat was effected against very great obstacles. Mr. Candler was serving his first term, and, according to party usage, was entitled, unless serious objections existed, to a second term. He was, therefore, the regular nominee of the Republican party, and he had the support of the party organization. The nominating convention was called by his friends at an unusual time, that he might have the advantage of being early in the field, and they tried, but without success, to have his nomination made unanimous. And how far the press was enlisted in his behalf, appears from this: As the character and objects of the new movement were commonly misrepresented, your president wrote a brief statement defining its true aims and character, and sent it to every one of the thirty-three newspapers published in the district, with a request that, as a matter of simple fairness, they would give it a place in their columns. Out of them all, but one ventured to publish it; and one offered to publish it if paid for as an advertisement! When first elected, Mr. Candler’s majority was nearly 6000, and his friends counted on his re-election by 3000 majority. Although Mr. Lyman was also nominated by the Democrats, he was by many of them thought to be too strongly Republican, and by others as too aristocratic, so that many of their votes were cast for Mr. Candler. This was the first contest that had been entered upon squarely on the Civil Service issue. The defeated candidate owed his defeat almost solely to his shortcomings in behalf of reform.

It is only due to our association to say that the credit of this first distinct victory for Civil Service Reform is due in a great degree to us. The movement began with and was carried on mainly by us, until success crowned our efforts, and the first Independent member was sent to Congress.

## EFFECT OF REPUBLICAN DEFEATS.

The effect of these defeats in New York and Massachusetts was very marked and widespread. The eyes of Republican Congressmen became fully opened to the fact that they could no longer play fast and loose with Civil Service Reform, but must do something to save the party from ruin.

The effect upon the next Congress is well described by Mr. Curtis: "It was universally conceded that whatever else the result [of the election] might mean, it was a clear and decisive demand of the country for Civil Service Reform. The response of Congress was immediate, and never was the flexibility of a popular system more signally displayed."

He then goes on to detail how bills were presented day after day in both houses, until by a vote in the House of one hundred and fifty-five yeas to forty-seven nays, eighty-seven not voting, the Pendleton bill was passed. "The House," he continued, "which was so eager to make the bill a law that it would not tolerate debate, and loudly cheered the proposal of an immediate vote, was the same house that, five months before, had derisively and angrily refused to give a paltry sum and to aid a single experiment of reform. Members who could not laugh loud enough at the ridiculous whim of transacting the public business upon business principles, now tumbled over each other in their breathless haste to make that whim the national policy. From the moment that Congress met, this question had taken precedence of all others. As Mr. Willis truly said, 'Bill had followed bill, resolution had crowded on resolution,' and Congress did not pause until the duty which it felt to be the most imperative was performed. The 'Congressional Record' of December 5 [1882] records the meeting of Congress. The 'Record' of January 5 [1883] records the passage of the Pendleton bill. I have told the story in detail, for I know no more amusing and significant story in the history of American politics."

## THE PENDLETON BILL.

The bill that goes by Mr. Pendleton's name was really drawn by Mr. Eaton. Mr. Pendleton had framed one modelled after the Jencks bill; but, seeing the superiority of Mr. Eaton's, he magnanimously withdrew his own and adopted his. The Pendleton bill may almost be regarded as a new "Bill of Rights," for it restores to the people at large, through open competitive examinations, a right of which they had been deprived by the insidious workings of the spoils system; the right of every citizen, irrespective of race, color, politics, religion or sex, to equal opportunity of entering the public service, without having to depend on the patronage or favor of any one, but solely on the ground of proved fitness for the place sought. And in doing this, it establishes a true democratic principle, which confers upon the working classes a distinct personal advantage in addition to the good the nation will derive from a purer and better public service.

## REFORM IN THE STATES.

The action of Congress had a speedy effect upon State Legislatures and cities. In New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, bills and resolutions in favor of Reform were introduced. In Ohio, no action resulted. In Pennsylvania, the bill was defeated, but another prohibiting assessments was passed. New York deserves the credit of being the first State to pass a Civil Service Reform bill. This is the more noteworthy, because in New York, nearly a century ago, the "spoils system" had its origin, and there it had received its worst development. Yet, in this hot-bed of corruption, where it would least have been expected, was the first determined, successful effort made in behalf of Reform. And it is also worthy of note, that this was done by a Democratic Legislature and a Democratic Governor, and by the remarkable majority in the House of ninety to three.

This result was of most cheering augury, for if New York could be won, success was clearly possible anywhere else.

The bill to apply the reform to the State and its cities was the first of its kind, and, therefore, experimental in its nature. It was drawn with great caution lest, if its provisions were too sweeping, it should be defeated. They therefore limited its application to cities of fifty thousand or more inhabitants, and left it optional with them to apply it or not; and they exempted from its operation the departments of Police, Health, Fire, Education and Law. These sweeping exceptions show how much there was to contend with, and how easy to create an opposition that might prove fatal.

The city of Brooklyn soon followed the example of New York, and steps were taken to introduce the reform in Buffalo and Rochester.

But so satisfactory did the new system prove, and such was the advance in public sentiment, that within a year a new law was passed, making the reform imperative upon all the cities of the State, and including in its scope all the departments which previously were exempt. And a stringent bill forbidding political assessments also was passed.

This Mr. Curtis describes as a prodigious achievement, due in great measure to the influence of the associations in enlightening public opinion.

#### MOVEMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS.

At a meeting of the Massachusetts League, in July, 1883, it was resolved that a committee of five should be appointed to report what specific legislation they would advise for introducing the reform in this State and its cities. Your president, as chairman of the executive committee, nominated Moorfield Story, Leverett Saltonstall, Charles Theodore Russell, Richard H. Dana and Josiah Quincy.

After some months of deliberation and consultation with leaders of the reform in New York, these gentlemen prepared a bill which, with some amendments and after prolonged discussion, was passed by the Legislature.

A very important feature of this bill is the provision that the class of laborers in cities shall be brought under its operation.

To effect this had been regarded as one of the most difficult problems connected with the new system. It was seen clearly enough that no reform which aimed to free the administration of States and cities from political influences, could be complete while the class of laborers, so numerous, so dependent, and, consequently, so liable to be influenced by political schemers, was left beyond its reach ; but, from the difficulty of devising an effective plan, nothing previously had been attempted. Massachusetts therefore deserves the honor of being the first to take this important step. And the credit is due mainly to the associations of the State, which have labored so faithfully and diligently in enlightening the public mind and awakening public interest.

#### STATE OF THE REFORM TO-DAY.

The status of the reform to-day may be briefly summed up thus :

Under the Act of Congress of 1883, a Civil Service Commission was appointed, with Mr. Dorman B. Eaton as chairman. The duties of this commission have been arduous. It has had to frame rules and devise expedients for applying the new system on a very extensive scale to interpret laws and rules ; answer inquiries ; give instructions on many points to those entrusted with carrying out the details of the system ; and keep up an extensive correspondence. In its own words, the commission “entered upon no highway, but has had to make its road as it advanced.”

And yet its work in the first six months was so satisfactory as to call for the decided approval of the President and every member of the Cabinet, and of the collectors and postmasters in all the most important cities.

The President said, “The good results foreshadowed had been fully realized. The system had fully answered the expectations of its friends in securing competent and faithful public servants, and protecting the appointing officers from the pressure of personal importunity.”

And in June last a select committee of eight Democrats and five Republicans, to which two bills to repeal the Civil Service Act were referred, reported that great good had been accomplished in many directions by the Civil Service Commission; that they were entirely satisfied with its thorough, conscientious and non-partisan work; — and believed that “its continuance will aid to a great degree in eradicating the prevalent evils of the Civil Service,” and they unanimously recommend an adverse report upon the proposed bills.

The second report of the commission goes to confirm the favorable views previously expressed concerning it. The heads of departments, collectors, naval officers, appraisers, supervisors, surveyors and postmasters, all bear testimony to the good results following the new system. It has been put in operation all over the country. During the last year examinations have been held in all the States, except Oregon and Nevada, and in some of the more populous States in from three to six different places. The total number of examinations has been one hundred and sixty-two. The number of persons examined has been sixty-three hundred and forty-seven; fifty-five hundred and twenty-five males, eight hundred and twenty-two females. Of these, forty-one hundred and forty-one, or 65 per cent of the whole, proved eligible for appointment. More than 70 per cent had had only a common-school education, and the average age was nearly thirty years. And as these examinations are freely open to all persons, and as the two great political parties are nearly equal in numbers, the Commissioners conclude that it is only a reasonable inference, that about nine hundred Republicans, and as many Democrats, have secured places in the public service during the past year, under the operation of the Civil Service Act.

It has become operative over about fifteen thousand of the public offices of the United States, and it can be applied more widely whenever the President so orders. It has been adopted by the States of New York and Massachusetts, and bills favoring its introduction have been pending in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Missouri and California, and are

proposed in Connecticut and New Jersey. Twenty-five cities in New York, with a population of two and one half millions, and twenty-three in Massachusetts, comprising more than half its population, are now brought under its rules. About seventy associations are in existence, several of which issue publications, some of which are periodical, so that thousands of documents are issued monthly. Stringent laws have been passed against political assessments by Congress. New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and are pending in other States. And, where in some cases they have been defeated, it has been owing more to some objection as to details, rather than to the principle involved.

In little over four years all this has been accomplished, — a result far beyond the expectations of the most sanguine when the movement began. And what argues still better for the future, is that the great majority of intelligent, right-minded people, have come to regard Civil Service Reform as essential to the purity and wise administration of our Government. Already officials are exercising greater caution in making appointments and removals where the strict letter of the law does not apply; and the public scrutinizes with a much more watchful eye the changes that are made. But, much as has been done, much more remains to be done. Only a small portion of the one hundred and twenty thousand officials in the service of the United States is brought under the Civil Service rules. And the great majority of our States and cities have made no effort to introduce them. Still the law exists limiting the term of thousands of offices to four years, and needs to be repealed. Still the contest against political assessments must be waged, until they are wholly put an end to. Every extension of the reform is to be regarded as only preparing the way for its wider application, until the time shall have come when, with few exceptions, the whole machinery of our Government will be carried on unaffected by the change of parties.

That this is no idle dream the experience of England teaches us. There, with a Civil Service as extensive as our own, a change of administration affects less than forty officials, who by

their positions represent and carry out the policy of the dominant party.

The advocates of reform have seen that one of its chief dangers would be encountered when the supremacy passed from one political party to the other. For believers in the "spoils system" are still numerous among those who for so many years have been deprived of power. The rush for office would naturally be very great; and unless the President should prove to be of more Spartan firmness and consistency than any of his predecessors of late have been, there would be great danger that the new system would be disregarded, if not overthrown.

The dreaded ordeal has come. The emergency has been nobly met. The Rubicon has been fairly passed.

President Cleveland is proving himself the man for the time and the place.

In his hands Civil Service Reform bids fair to be not only well sustained, but to exert more and more a benign influence in purifying and elevating our public service.

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